

Economic Development Element

Introduction

Economic development includes a wide range of components and activities. Although it is most often thought of in terms of attracting *industry* to the community, it is much more. The economy of Amesbury is driven by the interactions and activities of several hundred business enterprises. These businesses manufacture products, sell goods and provide services to a wide variety of markets – some local, some global. The economic development element of the Master Plan needs to address Amesbury’s economy as a whole, focusing on actions that enhance and support the individual businesses which operate in the community.

An important aspect of economic development is the desire on the part of the community to increase its non-residential tax base by increasing the stock of businesses that are located in the community. It is generally believed that the tax revenues generated by businesses—either through real and personal property tax payments or sales taxes that ultimately come back to the community—are fiscally positive; that is, the tax revenues are greater than the costs to provide municipal services. Businesses located in Amesbury also provide secondary benefits through the expenditures of their employees in the community, which in turn support other businesses and subsequent local spending.

Businesses in Amesbury also help define the character of the community. Once famous as a New England manufacturing town, Amesbury’s industrial heritage has shaped it both physically as well as politically. It’s compact downtown retail and service core, located mere steps from the majority of the historic mill structures, is surrounded by relatively dense residential neighborhoods. With limited suburban commercial development, Amesbury has retained much of its traditional New England village character where a mix of uses co-exist. The community’s proximity to the New Hampshire border, with its tax-free retail status, has also helped to shift the mix of commercial activity in the downtown towards more service-oriented establishments.

In addition to its downtown core, a wide variety of commercial and industrial uses have developed in other parts of Amesbury. The Route 110 corridor hosts a number of commercial (retail) and industrial businesses, several industries are located in the industrial park and along Hunt Road, and Macy Street has developed into an auto-dependent retail and service center serving both local and regional needs.

The following sections provide an overview of economic conditions in the region, information on the businesses that currently exist in Amesbury, a description of the existing land use/zoning patterns that impact the location of different businesses and a summary of efforts that are currently underway to enhance Amesbury's economy.

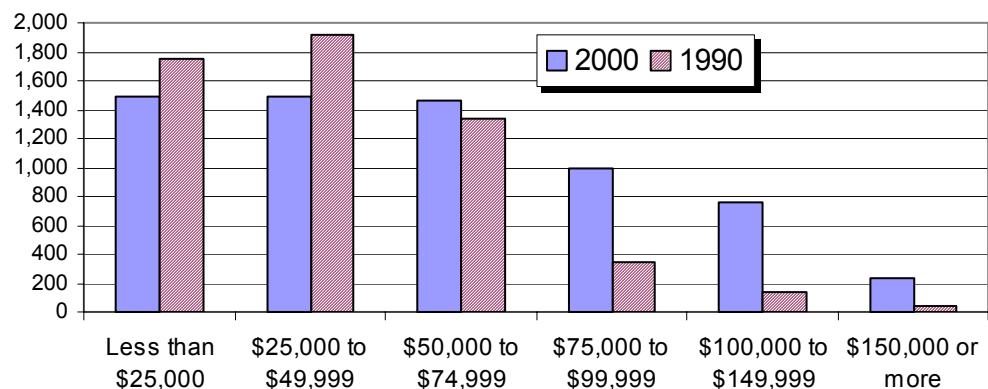
Incomes

Between 1989 and 1999, the median household income in Amesbury increased by 37 percent to \$51,906, on par with the statewide change and slightly ahead of income growth for Essex County. Amesbury's income is slightly higher than both the statewide average of \$50,502 and the County at \$51,576. Amesbury's median household income ranks 11th in the County, which ranges from a low in Lawrence of \$27,983 to a high in Boxford of \$113,212.

As shown in Figure ED-1, household income distribution in Amesbury has shifted to the higher income brackets over the past decade, with substantial gains in the number of households earning \$75,000 or more per year. However, the graphic also illustrates the diversity of incomes that exist within the community.

Per capita income rose 56.3 percent between 1989 and 1999 from \$15,423 to \$24,103. Although the 1999 per capita income level in Amesbury was less than that statewide (\$25,952) and for the County (\$26,358), its rate of growth over the decade was substantially greater.

Figure ED-1
Household Income Levels: 1990 and 2000



Source: U.S. Census

Median family income in Amesbury, at \$62,875 in 1999, grew 41 percent over the previous decade. Family income was slightly lower compared to Essex County (\$63,746) but higher than the state (\$61,664).

According to the latest Census data, in 1999 there were 166 families, representing 3.9 percent of all households, and 951 individuals (5.9 percent of the population) in Amesbury living below the poverty level. Among the families, 136 included children under 18 years of age and among the individuals, 147 were 65 years of age or older. In 1989, there were 215 families, or 5.4 percent of households, living in poverty (150 with children) and 121 elderly individuals.

Employment

Amesbury has a diversified economic base. In 2001, there were approximately 390 establishments in the community employing 4,969 workers in a variety of industries and jobs¹. At the same time, Amesbury's labor force (individuals 16 years and older) was estimated at 8,449, with 8,142 residents actually employed, and 307 (or 3.7 percent) unemployed. This data indicates that Amesbury "exports" labor to other communities.

As shown in Figure ED-2, Amesbury's labor force was relatively stable throughout the 1980's at about 7,200, growing along with the population through the 1990's to the current level. Unemployment in Amesbury was consistently higher than the Massachusetts average during the 1980's, perhaps reflecting its historic manufacturing heritage, but out-performed the broader economy in the 1990's.

As seen in Table ED-1, a little over 80 percent of Amesbury's employed workforce (population 16 and older) is employed in wage and salary positions, while nearly seven-percent are self-employed in non-incorporated businesses. These statistics have remained relatively constant over the past decade. The precise number of self-employed individuals who own and operate incorporated businesses (and therefore are included in the Private Wage category) may be substantially higher based on anecdotal information and the number of small businesses in the community.

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¹ Employment figures represent workers at firms who report earnings to the State. There may be a few additional jobs that go unreported (such as domestic help or part-time and seasonal labor).

Figure ED-2
Unemployment Rate: 1983 to 2001



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

Table ED-1
Employed Workforce

Employed Labor Force	1999	Percent of Total	1989	Percent of Total	Change	Percent Change
Private Wage and Salary Workers	6,961	81.2%	6,025	81.3%	936	15.5%
Government Workers	1,017	11.9%	885	11.9%	132	14.9%
Self-employed Workers	593	6.9%	504	6.8%	89	17.7%
Total	8,571	100.0%	7,414	100.0%	1,157	15.6%

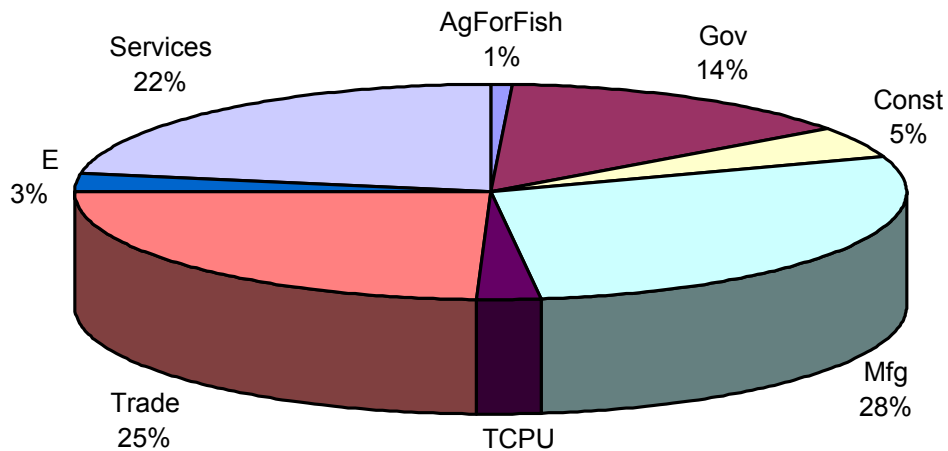
Source: U.S. Census (SF-3)

The majority of Amesbury's employment (in 2001) is relatively evenly distributed between the Service (22 percent), Trade (25 percent) and Manufacturing (28 percent) sectors of the economy. Government employment is also relatively strong at 14 percent while the other sectors account for approximately 11 percent of employment.² Figure ED-3 graphically illustrates the current mix of employment by industry sector, while Figure ED-4 tracks employment by major sector over the past two decades.



² In Figure ED-3, TCPU stands for "Transportation, Communications and Public Utilities," FIRE represents "Finance, Insurance and Real Estate," while AgForFish stand for "Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing."

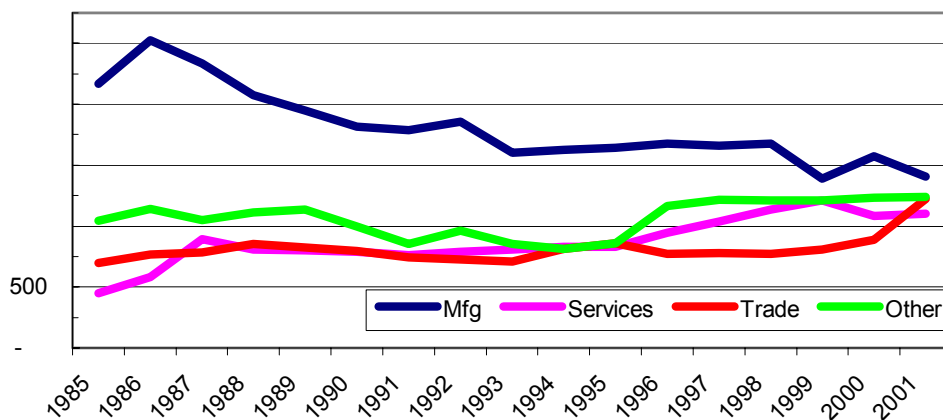
Figure ED-3
Distribution of Employment by Sector: 2001



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

As can be seen in Figure ED-4, manufacturing employment declined throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's, stabilizing for few years before starting down again in the last few years. Both Trade and Services employment have grown while other employment sectors remained relatively stable, except for a jump in government employment around 1996.

Figure ED-4
Employment by Sector Trends: 1985-2001



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

Overall employment levels in Amesbury have generally remained in the 4,000 to 5,000 range since 1985, increasing to the present level (4,969) from a low of 3,974 in 1993, as shown in Table ED-2. A more revealing breakdown of employment by Amesbury firms is shown in Table ED-3, which shows employment by NAICS sector.³

Table ED-2
Employment in Amesbury by SIC Sector: 2001

	Employees	Percent
Agriculture/Forest/Fish	48	1.0%
Government	691	13.9%
Construction	245	4.9%
Manufacturing	1,408	28.3%
TCPU	120	2.4%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	1,220	24.6%
Fire	134	2.7%
Services	<u>1,103</u>	<u>22.2%</u>
Total Employment	4,969	100.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Environment and Training

Table ED-2
Employment in Amesbury by SIC Sector: 2001

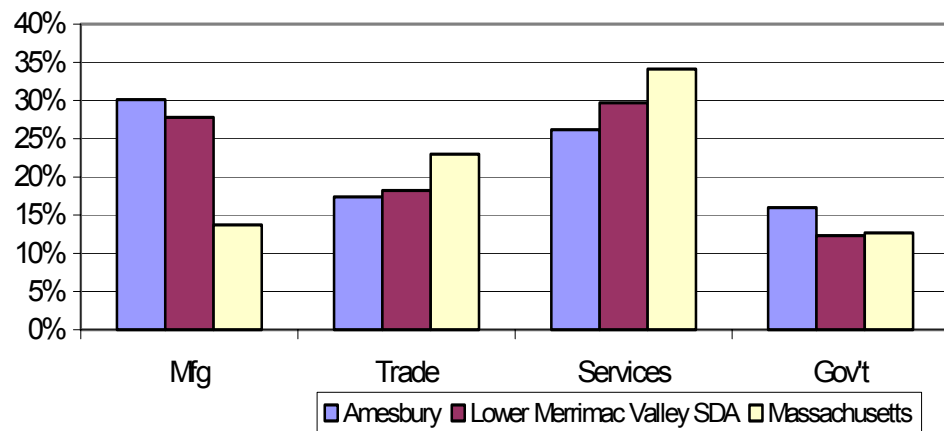
	Employees	Percent
Accommodations and Food Service	413	8.3%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	55	1.1%
Administrative and Support, Waste Management	96	1.9%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	240	4.8%
Construction	253	5.1%
Educational Services	19	0.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	559	11.2%
Finance and Insurance	111	2.2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	32	0.6%
Government	691	13.9%
Information	26	0.5%
Other Services	131	2.6%
Retail Trade	572	11.5%
Transportation and Warehousing	112	2.3%
Utilities	57	1.1%
Wholesale Trade	194	3.9%
Not Accounted For	<u>346</u>	<u>7.0%</u>
Total	4,969	100.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

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3 NAICS stands for North American Industry Classification System, which has been recently adopted to replace the SIC coding system.

Current employment in Amesbury, as well as in the Merrimac Valley region, is more heavily concentrated in manufacturing than the rest of state as a whole, with approximately 30 percent of local jobs in this sector compared to less than 14 percent statewide, as shown in Figure ED-5. Amesbury is also somewhat more dependent on government employment and has substantially fewer trade and service jobs. Manufacturing employment in Amesbury, while once heavily dependent on durable goods, has shifted more and more towards high technology and specialty goods over the past decade. Major manufacturing employers include companies in machine tools and shops, labeling, antennae systems and components, and printed circuit boards.

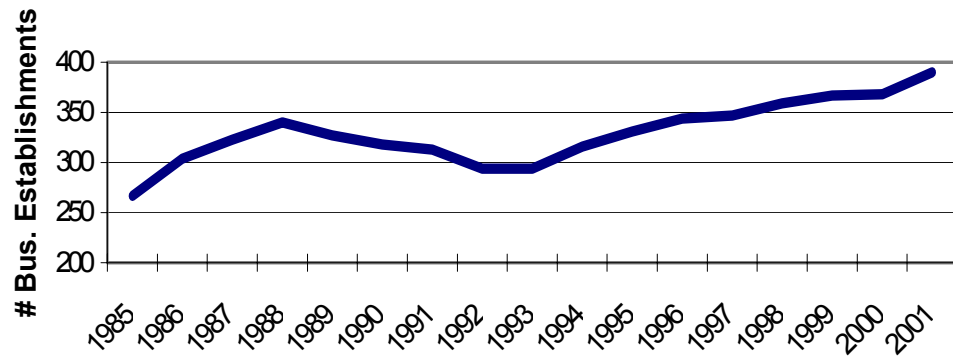
Figure ED-5
Employment by Major Sector – 1999



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

An interesting and important trend among employers in Amesbury is the strong growth in the number of firms that has occurred over the past decade. As shown in Figure ED-6, the number of business establishments has grown by 46 percent from approximately 260 to nearly 400 since 1985, while employment grew only 14 percent over the same time frame. This indicates that the average company size has gotten smaller, from an average of nearly 17 employees in 1985 to about 12 employees in 2001. The growing number of businesses in Amesbury is a very positive finding, that could benefit job creation and economic development in the community.

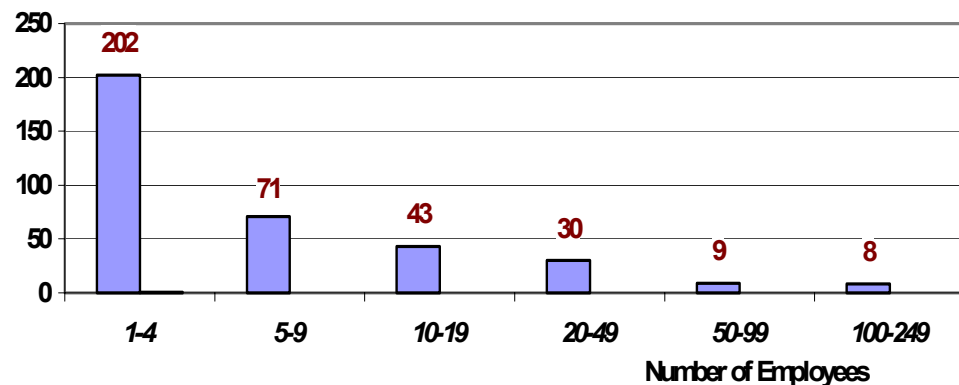
Figure ED-6
Business Establishment Trends: 1995 to 2001



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

The concept of Amesbury as a “small business community” is reinforced by data from the Census Bureau’s County Business Patterns, which reported that in 2000 over half of Amesbury’s 363 business establishments had fewer than five employees, and that more than 75 percent had fewer than ten employees, as shown in Figure ED-7.

Figure ED-7
Business Establishment Trends: 1995 to 2001



Source: U.S. Census 2000 County Business Patterns

As indicated earlier, Amesbury “exports” employment in many sectors, because the labor force is larger than the number of jobs provided by employers in the community. Table ED-4 provides a comparison of these employment bases by industry.

Table ED-4
Jobs in Amesbury vs. Workforce Employment

Employment Category	Jobs in Amesbury	Resident's Employment
Accommodations, Food Service, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	468	490
Administrative, Support, Waste Mgmt, Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	336	792
Construction	253	488
Education, Healthcare & Social Assistance	578	2,004
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	143	445
Government	691	269
Information	26	276
Manufacturing	1,062	1,762
Other Services	131	246
Retail Trade	572	973
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	169	372
Wholesale Trade	194	389
Not Accounted For	<u>350</u>	<u>65</u>
Total	4,973	8,571
Number of Establishments:		390
Average Annual Wage Paid in Amesbury		\$33,787
Median Earnings Amesbury Residents (2000)		\$30,612

Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training and U.S. Census

The average annual wage paid by employers in Amesbury, as reported by the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training, rose from \$17,041 in 1985 to \$33,815 in 2001, an increase of 98.4 percent. On the other hand, the median earnings of Amesbury residents in 2000 was \$30,612, slightly less than the average wage paid by local businesses, as shown in Table ED-4.

The total number of businesses located in Amesbury may range as high as 500-600, depending on definition and source. While the County Business Patterns (US Census) reported a total of 363 business establishments in 2000, the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training counted 368 reporting establishments in that year, and 390 in 2001 (the latest data available, see Table ED-4). On the other hand, Dun & Bradstreet, a leading national purveyor of financial information on businesses, indicates a current total of 625 business sites, which includes many very small businesses (including single proprietors) that may not register with the state

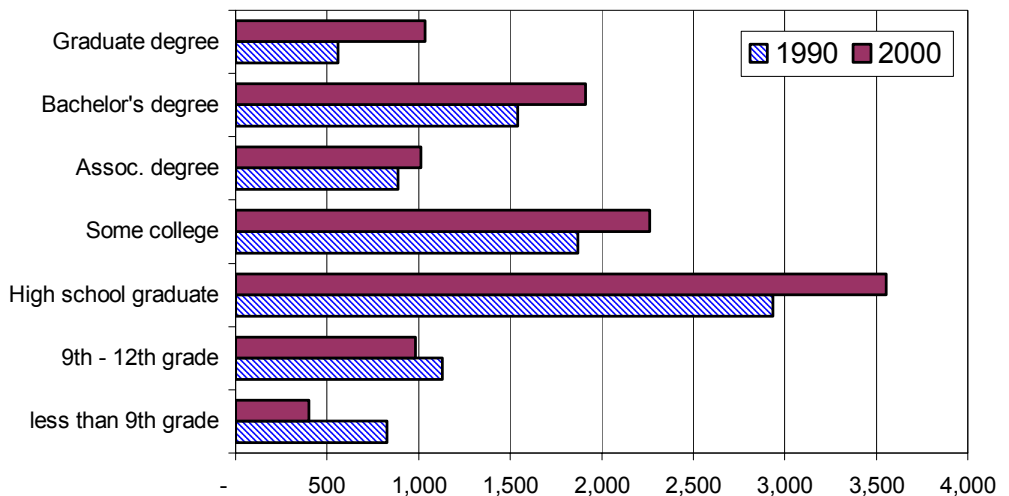
for reporting purposes, as well as branch offices of companies that operate in Amesbury but are not based there.

In general, Amesbury's economic base consists of mostly small private businesses with fewer than 250 employees and a few larger public organizations such as the school system and the hospital. The largest employers in Amesbury include a number of manufacturing firms as well as several service organizations. A list of the larger employers in the community along with an estimate of the current number of employees, the products or services offered and the primary product classification code for the business is discussed later in this chapter.

Educational Attainment

In addition to its diverse yet changing economic characteristics, Amesbury's population also exhibits a wide range of educational achievement that is becoming more focused on secondary and post-secondary attainment. As shown in Figure ED-8, in 2000 the average resident aged 25 and older had more years of formal schooling than in 1990. During the decade, in which this population increased by 14.5 percent (1,412 people), the number of individuals who had not completed a high school diploma dropped by 29 percent (576) while the number of high school graduates (no college) increased 21 percent (621), and those with college degrees increased by nearly 33 percent (973). The number of people with graduate degrees residing in Amesbury increased by 476, or 85 percent, during this time span.

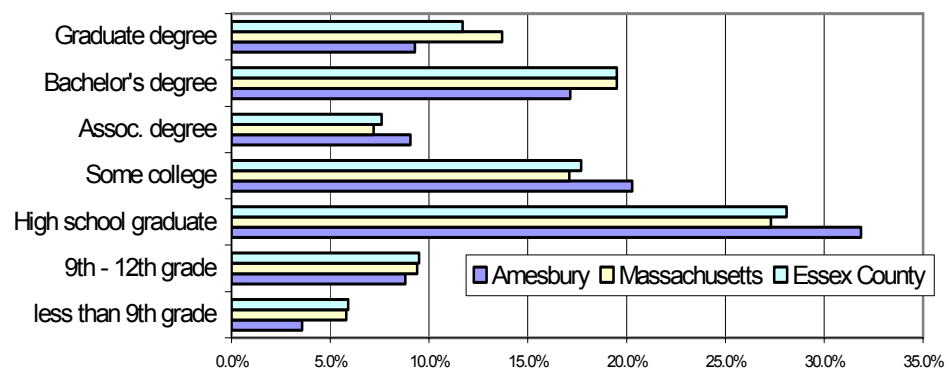
Figure ED-8
Educational Attainment 1990 and 2000



Source: U.S. Census data (SF-3)

As shown in Figure ED-9, Amesbury has a higher proportion of residents with high school, some college and associates degrees than either the Commonwealth or Essex County. However, the community has fewer residents with bachelor's or graduate degrees. This data is similar to that reported in the 1990 Census which also indicated that Amesbury had fewer residents with less-than high school educations and more with high school diplomas or some college.

Figure ED-9
Comparative Educational Achievement – 2000



Source: U.S. Census (SF-3)

Economic Conditions

According to the New England Economic Project (NEEP⁴), the economic downturn that has affected the New England and national economies over the past two years should start to experience modest growth starting in 2003. Based on economic indicator projections for the greater Boston metropolitan area (Metropolitan Statistical Area or MSA) between 2002 and 2005, the metropolitan area's economy (based on gross metropolitan product) is projected to expand modestly by \$60 billion (19 percent) over the four-year period. Between 2000 and 2001, the annual growth in gross metropolitan product averaged three-percent. However, with gross metropolitan product projected to average annual growth of over five-percent between 2002 and 2005, economic recovery and expansion should be under way.

Other economic indicators for the area indicate recovery and expansion over the short-term. For example, establishment employment, although modest, is projected to expand by over 160,000 jobs (five-percent) over the 2002-2005 time period.

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⁴ NEEP is a member supported non-profit economic think-tank which provides economic trend and projection information for all the New England states and selected metropolitan areas.

Employment growth is projected to be heavily concentrated in the service and trade sectors (which are typically low wage and low skill sectors) with these sectors capturing over 85 percent of the employment growth.

According to NEEP, the area's unemployment rate should decrease modestly by approximately one-half a percentage point to a rate of approximately 4.5 percent between 2002 and 2005. The most precipitous decline in unemployment should take place in 2003 and 2004 with the number of unemployed stabilizing in 2005.

Unemployment among Amesbury residents was approximately 3.6 percent in 2001, up slightly from the previous two years but significantly below rates experienced in the early 1990's. As of September 2003, Amesbury's unemployment rate of 6.4 percent is above the State at 5.7 percent, and National 6.1 percent averages according to the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board website.

Although economic recovery and growth is expected to take place within the area over the short-term based on modest increases in most non-real estate economic indicators, the residential real estate market is projected to slow and/or stabilize based on the number of projected new residential housing permits issued. Between 2002 and 2005, NEEP projects a total of approximately 16,200 residential permits issued by metropolitan area communities representing an increase of about 200 (approximately one-percent). Although the supply of new residential units is expected to slow, sale prices for existing units is projected to continue to climb higher with the median sale price approaching \$400,000 by 2005, representing an increase of about \$34,000 or nine-percent.

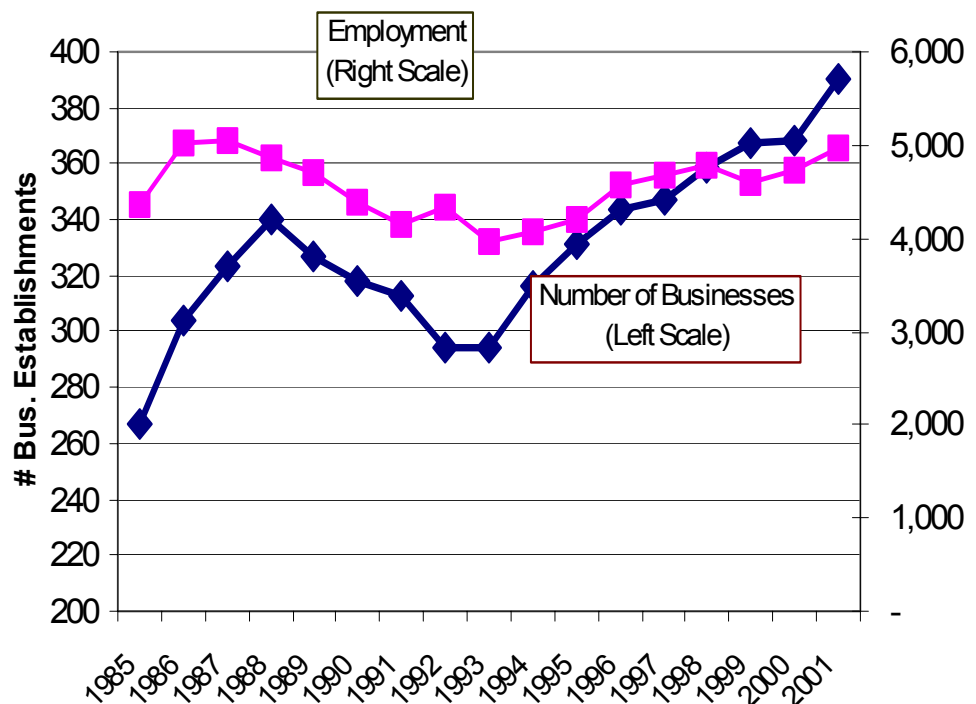
It should be noted that the economic projections provided are based on the best available economic information available for the state, metropolitan, New England and national economies. It should also be assumed that as a community within the Boston Metropolitan Area, Amesbury should not necessarily mirror, but reflect the overall economic conditions of the area. Furthermore, the short-term projections provided do not account for unforeseen social, political or economic circumstances that may alter the projected economic indicators provided.

Although the New England economy has felt the pinch associated with the downturn of the national economy, projections indicate that economic recovery and growth is on the horizon. As the primary driver of the New England economy, the Boston Metropolitan Area is expected to experience modest growth in most indicator sectors including employment, wages, income and declines in unemployment. However, the continued and projected cooling of the new supply of new residential units indicates caution by builders.

Existing Businesses

Amesbury is home to over 600 businesses, ranging from high tech manufacturing companies serving a global marketplace, to very small “mom & pop” type retail and service firms serving their local neighborhood. Two primary sources were used to estimate the number of businesses located in Amesbury. The Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training publishes monthly annual employment statistics on firms by town. The most recently published data (2001) indicated a total of 390 reporting establishments, an increase of 22 over the previous year. These firms represent private sector companies with paid employees that make regular reports to the Commonwealth. Total employment was reported to be 4,969. Figure ED-10 shows the growth in the number of companies and employment levels in Amesbury over the past 16 years. The trend towards more businesses compared to the relatively stable employment levels support the fact that Amesbury is a small business community, with a most recent average of 12.7 employees per company. Information provided in the 2000 Census (County Business Patterns) indicated that more than 75 percent of Amesbury’s businesses (363) had fewer than 10 employees.

Figure ED-10
Business Establishment Trends: 1995 to 2001



Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

Dun and Bradstreet, a leading national business financial information company, lists a total of 625 “establishments” in its database having an address in Amesbury. This list includes nearly all business entities including part-time and single-proprietor firms as well as government agencies, municipal departments and not-for-profit organizations. These businesses are distributed among several industry sectors as shown in Table ED-5, indicating the diversity of Amesbury’s economy.

Table ED-5
Amesbury Establishments – 2002

Industry Category	Number	Percent
Agriculture	14	2.2%
Construction	69	11.0%
Manufacturing - Nondurable Goods	15	2.4%
Manufacturing - Durable Goods	40	6.4%
Transportation, Comm.& Public Utilities	23	3.7%
Wholesale Trade	33	5.3%
Retail Trade	96	15.4%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	35	5.6%
Business & Personal Services	164	26.2%
Health, Legal & Social Services	108	17.3%
Government	9	1.4%
Not classified	<u>19</u>	<u>3.0%</u>
Total Establishments	625	100.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

In many ways, Amesbury serves as an “incubator” for new, growing businesses. With a relative abundance of affordable work space, a wide variety of smaller businesses, many in the start-up stages, have been able to establish themselves in their respective markets and potentially grow to a point where they need to expand. This incubator concept should be encouraged, since it is an excellent way of creating new job opportunities for local residents, while helping in the transformation of older real estate into higher and better uses, thereby improving the community’s tax base. Several of the older mill buildings in the downtown area support multiple small businesses in this manner, contributing to Amesbury’s dynamic mix of uses.

The leading employers in Amesbury include the following:

- Shaheen Brothers, Haverhill Road – grocery wholesale (100-249 employees)
- Cargocaire Engineering, Monroe Street – appliance dealers (100-249)
- Mariner Health, Maple Street – health services (100-249)
- Harborside Health Care, Morrill Place - health services (100-249)

- Bartley Machine, Water Street – fabricated metal parts (185)
- Tech-Ceram Corp., 18 Hunt Road – microwave components (125)
- Munters Corp., Monroe Street – dehumidification systems (180)
- Eastern Mfg., Industrial Way – printed circuit boards (125)
- Amesbury Group, Hunt Road – foam weather stripping (106)

Other large employers include the Amesbury school system with a total of eight schools, the local hospital and several smaller manufacturing companies that employ from 15 to 100 people.

Downtown Amesbury enjoys a healthy mix of retail outlets and service businesses. Most businesses are local independent stores with a few national or regional “name-brands” or franchises included. It is estimated that about one half of the 100 or so retail businesses in the Town are located in the downtown, which is currently exhibiting relatively low vacancy rates and moderate turnover. Although a few downtown business establishments have been there for many years, there has been a resurgence of new proprietors opening a wide variety of shops including restaurants, art galleries and specialty clothing.

Employment Projections

The total in-place employment base in Amesbury is projected to have approximately 4,850 jobs by 2025, representing a decrease of about 100 jobs since 2005. Approximately half of all manufacturing jobs are projected to be lost in Amesbury between 2005 and 2025. The Government sector is projected to lose approximately 50 jobs over the same time period. Modest employment gains are projected in the Service (221 jobs or 20 percent), Trade (207 jobs or 16 percent) and Transportation Communication and Public Utilities (TCPU) (115 jobs or 78 percent) sectors over the same time period. Finance Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) sector employment is projected to remain static at about 135 jobs. These employment forecasts, shown in Table ED-6, were done by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in March 2003 and are based on local historical ES202 employment trends scaled against the regional employment average.

These projections are based on historical trends only and do not take into account business attraction efforts, land use, zoning or other local initiatives that impact business activities.

Table ED-6
Employment Projections by Industry Sector: 2005 to 2025

	2005	2025	# Change 05-25	% Change 05-25
Government	684	627	-57	-8.3%
Ag/Forest/Fish	57	71	14	24.6%
Construction	262	320	58	22.1%
Manufacturing	1,304	643	-661	-50.7%
TCPU	147	262	115	78.2%
Trade	1,268	1,475	207	16.3%
FIRE	135	136	1	0.7%
Services	1,093	1,314	221	20.2%
Total	4,950	4,848	-102	-2.1%

Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council

TCPU stands for "Transportation, Communications and Public Utilities," FIRE represents "Finance, Insurance and Real Estate," while AgForFish stand for "Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing."

Workforce Development Programs

There are several programs active in Amesbury that serve the needs of employers and workers relative to occupational education and development.

Local/Regional/Statewide workforce development programs and service providers include:

- The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network provides high-quality, in-depth counseling, training and capital access which contributes to the entrepreneurial growth of small businesses throughout Massachusetts. Services are delivered through a network of skilled professional staff supported by a federal, state, and higher education consortium as well as several partnerships.

Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network
 Salem State College SBDC
 Frederick Young, Director
 SSC Enterprise Center
 121 Loring Avenue, Suite 310
 Salem, Massachusetts 01970

- The Center for Business and Industry at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, provides workforce development programs to Amesbury clients. The Institute recently established a Workforce Training Fund, a state program that provides grants for the training of incumbent workers. Partnering with local businesses, the Institute secured nearly one million dollars in training funds which assisted Tech-Ceram Corporation and Bartley RF Systems of Amesbury in 2003.

- The Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (LMVWIB) is one of 16 Workforce Boards in Massachusetts. The Board oversees and implements workforce development activities in the region, which includes 15 towns and cities from Lawrence to Newburyport. The Board also serves as a conduit for federal and state workforce development funds, and is composed of private sector business people, labor, education, and community leaders. The LMVWIB recently published (October 2003) a report, "Labor Force Blueprint," by O. Steven Quimby, Director of Planning and Policy Research, providing accurate labor market and information and targeting sectors for workforce training. The LMVWIB also helps connect employers with job seekers and provides people who are currently working, as well as those seeking employment, with the training they need. The Board's programs include the ValleyWorks One-Stop Career Center, School to Career, and Youth Summer Jobs and Education programs.

Workforce Investment Board (Adult Education)
Massachusetts Department of Education/ ACLS
350 Main Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148
(781) 338-3801

- There are four companies in Amesbury that have received funding under the Workforce Training Fund. The program is a state wide program funded through a dedicated tax of \$8.10, paid by employers only, on each of their employees. It is collected through unemployment fund tax. The grants have a range of \$2000 to \$250,000 for training of incumbent workers.

Other organizations that assist businesses and individuals in Amesbury include:

Amesbury Chamber of Commerce
Alliance for Amesbury
Amesbury, Massachusetts
(978) 388-3178

Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund
The Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund
Division of Employment and Training
19 Staniford Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02114
(800) 252-1591

Commonwealth Corporation
The Schrafft Center
529 Main Street, Suite 110,
Boston, MA 02129
(617) 727-8158

Valleyworks Career Center
Landmark Building
80 Merrimack Street
Haverhill, MA 01830
(978) 722-7000

Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council
60 Island Street
Lawrence, Massachusetts 01840-1835
(978) 975-8787

Zoning

Amesbury's zoning map, adopted August 8, 2000, contains a total of 16 zoning districts plus several overlay districts focused on specific areas of the community. Of the traditional zoning districts, six include non-residential uses as a major land use component, including:

CBD	Central Business District
C	Commercial
RCZD	Regional Commercial
DAD	Downtown Artist District
OP	Office Park
IL	Light Industrial
IC	Central Industrial
I	Industrial

In addition, the PUD (Planned Unit Development) district allows limited supporting commercial uses. The Elm Street and Hunt Road Overlay Districts provide flexibility in the allowed uses in these site-specific areas.

Amesbury's highly fragmented zoning map reflects both the diversity of uses and the historical context of the community. The largest contiguous economic development zones include the Industrial area on the north side of Route 110 (Haverhill Road) and south of I-495 around Hunt Road (which is also the focus of the Route 150/I-495 Gateway planning area. Both of these areas contain undeveloped and/or underutilized land that potentially could be developed. There are also two Office Park zones that are currently partially developed or undeveloped, including parcels on the south side of Route 110 just west of the I-495 interchange and the "Golden Triangle" land located off of Elm Street between I-495 and I-95 (which also includes land in Salisbury).

The remaining land that is zoned for economic development uses include the Central Business District and the Central Industrial zones, a Light Industrial area off Clinton Street and the several Commercial zones located primarily on Route 110.

Redevelopment opportunities exist within these zones, primarily on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Two PUD zones exist in Amesbury, one around Bailey's Pond and the other near the downtown at Main Street and Noel Street which includes the Post Office, two commercial buildings and a multi-tenant industrial property.

Initiatives

There are several economic development initiatives currently underway in Amesbury. These include active proposals for new development or redevelopment, planning efforts as well as the provision of technical support for companies, developers and individuals.

- **Office of Community and Economic Development** – This Town department plays a lead role in economic development, serving as both the “quarterback” for getting new projects approved and as a source of financing for many worthwhile projects. The OCED serves as a conduit for state and federal grants, loans and various services that can be used to assist private and non-profit organizations that benefit Amesbury's economy.
- **Alliance for Amesbury** – this membership-based organization serves as the focal point for economic development initiatives in Amesbury, sponsoring studies, holding forums and serving as the City's formal and informal liaison between the business community, government agencies and the citizens of Amesbury. It has been responsible for, or has played a major role in, many of the activities described in this report.
- **Route 150/I-495 Gateway mixed-use project** – this large-scale planning project was proposed and defined by a feasibility study done by Terrasphere/RKG in May 2001. It involves a total of 445 acres located on the south side of Hunt Road and the north side of Bailey's Pond. The master plan calls for 200 condominium units around Bailey's Pond, up to 175 apartments on a former truck-stop site, a small amount of office and commercial space along the Route 150 Extension, 93 acres of FlexSpace/Light Industrial land along Hunt Road and an 18 hole golf course on the former landfill owned by Waste Management, Inc. A developer's solicitation was made in 2002 and a developer (Fafard) has been chosen to proceed with the project.
- **Golden Triangle** – located north of Elm Street between I-495 and I-95 is zoned OP and has been the focus of attention for the development of a future office park. The land is constrained by wetlands and access issues (which require further study) and a number of historical properties on the Elm Street frontage.
- **Downtown Redevelopment** –facilitated by the Office of Community and Economic Development and the Alliance for Amesbury, numerous efforts have brought out substantial face-lifts for many downtown businesses as well as

sidewalk and traffic improvements over the past five years. Over 70 new units of housing are being created over a three year period (2001-2004), including many affordable housing units. The results have been instrumental in attracting residents back to the downtown for shopping as well as encouraging new retail shops and restaurants to open.

- **Upper and Lower Millyards** – both of these downtown areas have been the subject of extensive analysis by the Office of Community and Economic Development for redevelopment opportunities. A developer has been selected to create artist live/work space in the Upper Mill Yard, while an Economic Diversification Study focused on the Lower Mill Yard and Carriage Hill areas was completed in 1998.
 - The Upper Millyard Revitalization Project is a \$6.5 million dollar program to renew three historic mill buildings into 46 artisan live/ work condominiums and a heritage/ historic museum space. The developer, E.A. Fish Associates, purchased the buildings from the Town for \$353,000. These funds, working through the Town's Community Development Block Grant Program, were used to extend the Upper Millyard Park and upgrade existing and install new public facilities to accommodate the development and improve the Amesbury and Salisbury Mills Historic Park. The CDBG Program also contributed over \$2 million dollars to stabilize the buildings before seeking a developer and \$171,000 in MassDevelopment funding to remediate brownfields in the immediate area. The developer, E.A. Fish Associates, purchased the buildings from the Town for \$353,000.
 - The Lower Mill Yard, which currently includes a parking deck and the Town's Public Works yard, is envisioned for additional parking, new mixed-use development and expansion of the river walk.
- **Transportation Center/Lower Millyard** – this planning effort seeks to redevelop portions of the downtown to provide additional parking, a regional transportation hub and new senior center within the downtown area between Water Street and Chestnut Street.
- **Cedar Street Redevelopment** – This cluster of old mill buildings on Clark's Pond near the downtown has been the focus of several studies and building improvement efforts, including rezoning for artist live/work space. Work is currently underway to restore several of the buildings for light industrial and mixed uses.

Tourism

Amesbury's role as a historic manufacturing town, along with its revitalized downtown and scenic rural vistas has resulted in a growing number of visitors to the community. These visitors, in turn, spend money on goods and services that add to the town's economic base and support employment at a wide variety of businesses and organizations. Increasingly, such activities are seen as an important component in the future economic development of the community.

Although "tourism" is often linked to major destinations – for example, New Hampshire's beaches or Old Sturbridge Village – the term can be much more broadly defined to include almost any activity which attracts non-residents for reasons other than employment. In particular, visitors who come to Amesbury to see its historic features, visit its museums or to participate in cultural events or activities make up the bulk of the town's "tourists." Many of these venues are discussed in greater detail in the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter, including:

- Bartlett Museum
- Macy-Colby House
- Rocky Hill Meeting House (a Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities property)
- Whittier Home
- Lowell's Boat Shop (one of two properties owned and managed by the Newburyport Maritime Society)
- Amesbury Carriage Museum
- Mary Baker Eddy House
- Amesbury Library Special Collections.

Each of these museums has a different mission, role and story to tell, although many overlap artifacts and collections. Other venues include the Woodsom Farm (350-acre former dairy farm, once the largest in Essex County, and inspiration for Currier and Ives prints), and many residential and former industrial districts, such as Point Shore, Powow Hill, Carriage Hill, and The Training Field with a large number of identified historic properties and distinctive architectural integrity. Others are attracted to Amesbury's downtown district where they can eat at a restaurant, browse through one of several artisans' shops, or simply sit by or walk along the river's edge.

Although quantifying the economic impact of tourism is difficult due to the non-specific nature of the activities included, it is the consensus among participants in the Master Plan process that attracting visitors (and their spending) to Amesbury is important and should be an economic development priority.

Opportunities

While its location is generally considered a positive attribute, Amesbury faces some economic development challenges due to its geographic location between two major markets; namely, the greater Southern New Hampshire/Portsmouth area and the greater Boston region. Both the Southern New Hampshire/Portsmouth and Boston markets generally attract investment from business establishments due to their close proximity to customers and other business establishments. However, there may be investment opportunities for certain types of businesses due to the high median household incomes within Amesbury.

The opportunity areas in Amesbury focus on the existing zoning classifications, expanding the range and density of uses in each, possibly including some residential uses as part of mixed-use developments or to meet specialized market needs.

- Expand non-residential uses along Route 110/Haverhill Road corridor
 - Rezone (tighten zoning to allow more flexibility)
 - Provide incentives for developers to acquire and remove non-conforming uses
 - Allow mixed use w/ affordable and market rate housing
- Study in detail the development potential of the Golden Triangle
 - Wetland and historic district issues
 - Access from Route 150/I-95
 - Elm Street Overlay District
- Proceed with the Route 150/I-495 Gateway project
 - Preferred developer
 - Land acquisition/assemblage
- Continued support for Carriage Hill redevelopment
 - Inventory existing building space
 - Determine future space needs of tenants
 - Develop tools to assist existing businesses
 - Allow mixed-use w/ affordable and market rate housing

The redevelopment of certain areas of Amesbury has lagged behind others. These include among others the Lower Millyard, the Route 110 corridor and the Clinton Street area. There are a variety of reasons for this, potentially including market forces (demand), fractured ownership, inconsistent zoning, unwillingness or inability of owners to invest in their properties, as well as a lack of a clear vision for the future. The goal of this master planning process is to develop specific goals and objectives for these underutilized parts of the community.

Community Identified Assets and Liabilities

As part of the process to develop a Master Plan for the Town of Amesbury, Massachusetts, members of the Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) consultant team sought input from Amesbury community members on their issues, concerns and visions for the City. The process of identifying Amesbury's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats consisted of a series of focused interviews and public meetings to gain insight on elements that should be addressed in the Master Plan. These meetings included the following:

January 16 and 17, 2003	Interviews (over 100 people)
March 1, 2003	Public Open House on Assets and Liabilities (over 125 attendees)
March 22, 2003	Public Design workshop on Visioning (over 75 attendees)

The information compiled during the interviews and input received during the public meetings has been supplemented by the results of the 2002 Citizen Survey and with observations made by the consultant team during site visits. Additional input was received from the Master Plan Steering Committee, the seven Focus Groups for each of the Master Plan Elements and staff from the Office of Community and Economic Development.

The following sections provide a summary of what members of the Amesbury community have stated as being the Town's assets and liabilities. The statements reflect individual comments and viewpoints, and may or may not have factual basis.



Assets

- Downtown improvements are starting to bring a renewed interest in the area. The Millyards and other buildings provide significant opportunities to attract a diverse group of businesses to serve residents and visitors that would bring additional "life" to the area.
- There are opportunities to attract more tourism by building upon recreational, historic, cultural and artistic resources in Amesbury. Better marketing of these assets, along with attracting supportive uses such as restaurants, inns and B&B's, could draw visitors from neighboring communities.
- The affordability of mill space has attracted artists, with rents running from \$5 to \$8 per square foot for live/work space. There are opportunities to build upon the arts community as an economic development strategy through better marketing, more events and development of supporting uses (galleries, museums, etc.).

- Easy access to major highways and the quality of life offered through Amesbury's natural environment provides many opportunities for attracting economic development.
- The Hunt Road/"Terrasphere" area is well suited for commercial and industrial expansion given the amount of available land and access to I-495. New development would support goals to diversify the economy, bring in more jobs and increase the City's tax base.
- The "Golden Triangle" offers a unique location for long-term growth of high quality employment opportunities.
- The Industrial Park on Monroe Street has great potential for expansion.
- There are many small businesses, including home-based establishments, in Amesbury.
- The Alliance for Amesbury and the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce are viewed as making positive improvements for Amesbury.



Liabilities

- There is a lack of activities to bring people Downtown in the evenings and on weekends. Additional cultural attractions, open space, recreation and better access to the Riverwalk and the Powow River is needed as a draw to bring people Downtown.
- Additional uses are needed Downtown to continue the momentum of the recent improvements. Redevelopment efforts should focus on providing a variety of spaces for large and small business enterprises. Better effort should be made to attract new development such as mixed housing/office/retail, mid to high-end restaurants, entertainment venues, galleries and resident serving retail establishments.
- There is a need for better marketing strategies to promote Downtown revitalization and to recruit industries to the Hunt Road/"Terrasphere" area and the Golden Triangle. Such efforts are needed to reinforce efforts to recruit new businesses and to support and retain local smaller business enterprises.
- There is a need to balance economic and business development with preservation of open spaces, historic sites and the small town character of Amesbury. A careful balance is needed for attracting new commercial, industrial and tourist industries while maintaining a traditional "New England Village" environment.

- In order to build upon the arts and culture as an economic development strategy, better coordination or the formation of a formal cooperative organization is needed to manage and effectively promote marketing and business development efforts.
- The tax rate in Amesbury is one of the highest in the region, and may be a disincentive to encourage new businesses and economic growth. Consideration should be given to restructuring the tax rate or providing other incentives to recruit and retain businesses.
- A better working relationship is needed between the Alliance for Amesbury and the City. There are concerns that the Alliance should be more “welcoming” to additional businesses, including home-based businesses. Better communication methods between the City and the Alliance are needed to discuss goals and policies, to promote economic development activities, and to support local businesses.
- The lack of a sales tax in New Hampshire may be contributing to a lack of commercial development in Amesbury; customers go to where goods and services are affordable, merchants go to where the customers are.
- Renovation and rehabilitation of mill buildings to bring the sites up to current building codes is very costly and requires public incentives to attract private development, especially if there is environmental remediation involved.
- A lack of convenient, visible parking Downtown is a disincentive for attracting new businesses and for providing easy access for customers and visitors.
- The Router 110 corridor does not have a consistent character, with a mix of uses ranging from “suburban strip” to residential to light industrial activities. While there are opportunities for new development along Route 110, the area is limited due to transportation and access problems.
- Environmental considerations in the Golden Triangle area may limit opportunities for light industrial, high tech and research and development users.
- The City’s permitting process is viewed as cumbersome and inefficient. Complex permitting processes creates additional costs for developers that could inhibit attracting new businesses to the area.
- Unwanted businesses along Hunt Road/“Terrasphere” area raise concerns in the community.

Economic Development Recommendations

The following sections outline the work of the Master Plan Steering Committee and the Economic Development Focus Group to develop recommendations to guide economic development initiatives in the Town of Amesbury over the next 20 years. The recommendations are summarized on the Economic Development Action Plan Map.



Economic Development Vision

The Economic Development Focus Group developed the following Vision Statement to guide their efforts to develop recommendations:

Encourage and Support a Diversified Local Economic Base

Amesbury will be a vibrant community with a diverse tax base that protects and improves the quality of life while respecting the existing culture and community character. Planned economic development will keep Amesbury affordable and provide community oriented services in the downtown. A diverse and ecologically sound economic base will include retail, commercial, light industry, as well as using culture and the arts to stimulate economic growth. We will balance downtown development to provide goods and services for Amesbury residents, and encourage discreet industrial development in appropriate areas to enhance the tax base. We will highlight our natural, cultural and historic resources to promote tourism and ecotourism in Amesbury, complementing regional attractions.



Goals, Strategies and Actions

ED-1	Promote Amesbury as an attractive, supportive and business friendly community.
ED-1.1	Facilitate and foster a supportive environment for small, home-based, and startup businesses.
	➤ Develop continually updated written guides to assist early-stage businesses by providing information about local permitting processes, local business-to-business contacts, and business development opportunities.
	➤ Provide for and broaden access to volunteer business counseling and training services through local business groups.
	➤ Provide staff support within the Office of Community and Economic Development to provide technical support and resources to small, home-based, and startup businesses, including guidance in the local permitting process.
	➤ Continue the community practice of holding regular small business networking sessions, making the opportunities continually more inclusive and useful to participants.
	➤ Explore the feasibility of devoting space and support to an incubator business center to nurture startup firms.
ED-1.2	Retain the diversity of local employers while meeting the employment needs of the business community and local residents.

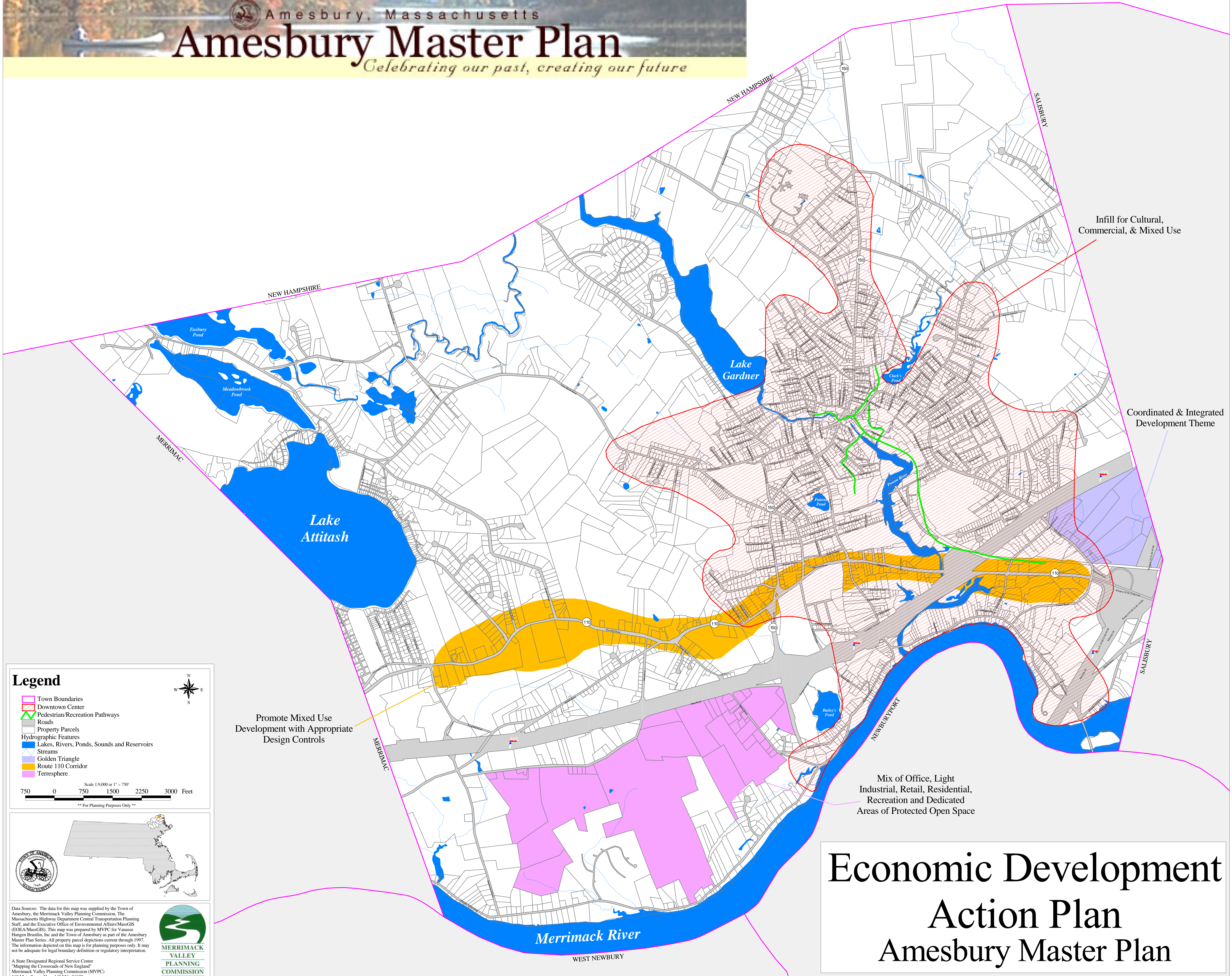
ED-1	Promote Amesbury as an attractive, supportive and business friendly community.
	➤ Survey existing businesses to determine their workforce needs and the qualifications needed for those positions.
	➤ Develop a report that details the skills and qualifications of resident workforce that can serve as a marketing tool for prospective commercial and industrial prospects.
	➤ Sponsor a career day in the middle school and high schools closely coordinated with local business needs, emphasizing existing local jobs, and the skills needed to get those jobs.
	➤ Develop school curricula that provide students with the qualifications needed to work at local businesses, possibly including a work study or apprenticeship program linked to local commercial and industrial employers.
	➤ Provide convenient access and support to local adult education programs that provide basic literacy skills and career retraining, coordinating local initiatives such as the Amesbury Learning and Literacy Partnership, with regional educational resources, such as community colleges and nearby universities.
ED-1.3	Encourage a climate of positive collaboration between the Town and the Alliance for Amesbury and other organizations that contribute to economic development.
	➤ Promote inclusive membership practices and public participation in the Alliance for Amesbury.
	➤ Ensure that the Alliance and OCED have adequate and coordinated staffing support in place to provide community liaisons to provide business development resources for new and existing businesses of all sizes.
	➤ Support continual assessment and reevaluation of the Alliance's performance and relationship with the Town.
	➤ Encourage the formation of diverse business and cultural groups to advocate their unique goals before policy makers and the community as a whole.
	➤ Encourage coordination between local and regional business organizations.

ED-2	Continue to create opportunities for business development and job creation initiatives.
ED-2.1	Promote further downtown revitalization through mixed uses, adaptive reuse of older buildings, and coordinated cultural programming.
	➤ Encourage viable retail and service uses along with crafts and arts-related activities to enhance the downtown's vibrancy and livability.
	➤ Prioritize the assistance of downtown mixed-use developments that make use of existing infrastructure.
	➤ Adopt a comprehensive approach to cultural resources and promotion, as described in ED-3, as a downtown redevelopment strategy.
	➤ Identify attractions that will create necessary 'foot traffic' to support existing downtown businesses, including frequent events at the Millyard Amphitheater, events at Town Park, and promoting athletic tournaments at playing fields to bring more people downtown on evenings and weekends.
ED-2.2	Encourage appropriate mixed-use development projects on previously identified potential sites in order to grow Amesbury's employment and tax base. <i>See also Land Use Goals 1 and 3.</i>
	➤ Give a primary focus to promoting downtown redevelopment, including in-fill sites and through the identification of mill buildings and existing structures that could be developed specifically for cultural, commercial and residential uses.
	➤ Pursue and promote development in the vicinity of the Terrasphere Project, including the Route 150 Gateway and Hunt Road areas.
	➤ Conduct a study to assess the full range of conceptual development alternatives for the "Golden Triangle," all to include a single access road and a coordinated and integrated development theme, with the goal of marketing the development opportunity to a master developer.
ED-2.3	➤ Implement a focused business Retention and Expansion (R&E) strategy for the downtown
	➤ Create a permanent R&E committee to oversee and implement the plans
	➤ Carry out the recommendations of the 1999 Downtown Technical Assistance Report regarding business retention, and recruitment

ED-3	Build upon the unique cultural resources within Amesbury as an economic development catalyst and a source of community identity.
ED-3.1	Establish a central yet collaborative program for promoting the culture and arts in Amesbury.

ED-3	Build upon the unique cultural resources within Amesbury as an economic development catalyst and a source of community identity.
	➤ Provide staff support within the Office of Community and Economic Development to officially represent Amesbury's arts/cultural community, for raising funds for cultural programs and promotion and for strengthening connections between existing arts/cultural organizations, the business community, government agencies, and local residents.
	➤ Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for the town that leverages and enhances the seasonal influx of tourists and regional visitors to Amesbury for agricultural-related activities.
	➤ Establish a comprehensive arts/culture marketing plan, including a website and/or videos, listing resources and containing a database of local and regional organizations, artisans, trades people, and projects.
	➤ Build collaborative relationships between the Amesbury Cultural Council, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and other arts/cultural institutions to position Amesbury as a target community for cultural development.
	➤ Coordinate and strengthen ties between cultural businesses and activities in Amesbury and the public school system's arts, crafts, and culture curriculums.
	➤ Create an arts/culture incentive program through the Office of Community and Economic Development to help obtain and distribute grants to cultural organizations, individuals, and businesses, and to encourage arts related and agricultural businesses to move to Amesbury.
	➤ Establish a program to recognize the efforts and achievements of arts/cultural organizations and individuals who have made significant contributions to the social fabric of the community.
ED-3.2	Develop a comprehensive portfolio of data highlighting Amesbury's historic and current cultural resources and make this portfolio easily accessible to and usable by a large audience, including marketers, planners, and buyers.
	➤ Conduct a comprehensive survey of Amesbury's existing cultural resources and businesses as a marketing and planning tool.
	➤ Design a 'cultural map' of Amesbury's downtown and surrounding areas, marking out key sites for a potential 'arts/culture district' and supporting businesses.
	➤ Create a research document outlining Amesbury's cultural history including trades, industries, agriculture and arts.
ED-3.3	Support the use of public and private space in Amesbury for cultural and arts-related purposes
	➤ Formally designate and name arts district(s), which should be areas with studios and galleries, or have buildings of significant architectural features or landscapes, and incorporate well-lighted pedestrian access, to correspond to the cultural map.
	➤ Develop a signage plan to direct people to arts districts, coordinated with any way-finding signage plan directing visitors to parking
	➤ Enhance public access and use of existing public spaces for cultural programming and special events, including the Millyard, Market Square, the downtown business district, Town Hall, and the public schools.

ED-4	Position Amesbury to take advantage of business expansion and growth opportunities
ED-4.1	Provide mechanisms to monitor economic trends and to promote the incorporation of those trends into the Town's economic development initiatives.
	➤ Analyze and review economic data and trend indicators to inform economic development efforts in the future, including relevant comparisons with national, state, and regional data and trends.
	➤ Create a comprehensive economic marketing program for Amesbury under the auspices of the Economic Development Director that incorporates all regional data and trend indicators, development action plans, the resident workforce report, the business employment needs survey, the small business guidance, and the cultural assessment and promotion efforts.
ED-4.2	Provide a full complement of local development tools to attract and plan for economic development opportunities. <i>See also Land Use Goal 4</i>
	➤ Draft a tax increment financing policy for Amesbury, outlining criteria that reflect the Master Plan's long-term community vision for offering tax incentives to businesses during the first five years of development or 75% of project build-out.
	➤ As an indicator of where town resources/ finances and legislative acts and ordinances are heading, incorporate into the annual Town Report a section on business development initiatives, additional needs, and the benefits of these initiatives to the community.



Data Sources: The data for this map was supplied by the Town of Amesbury, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, the Massachusetts Highway Department Central Transportation Planning Staff, and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs/MassGIS (EG&A/MassGIS). This map was prepared by MVP for Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and the Town of Amesbury as part of the Amesbury Master Plan Series. All property parcel depictions current through 1997. The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

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